

A report from the NATIONAL COMMITTEE

The National organisation acts as a cohesive body to bind all members into one Association.

From the National Committee (N/Comm) perspective looking at individual Groups, Branch and Post activities they continue to see as a whole a vibrant active Association. In addition the support of the members for the Annual Reunion, Parades, Services, Heritage displays, requests for the National Standard for local prestigious Parades continues apace and shows no significant signs of falling off. We are of course mindful at some stage this is bound to change and that the Association over time will reduce to a level where by it will no longer be viable to continue. The question for the N/Comm and membership is to be ready to recognise when that time has arrived.

The N/Comm recognise that for the vast majority of ordinary members their interest in Association matters centres around their local Group, Branch, Post, Team with limited interest in the wider National activities. However there continues to be significant support and interest to indicate a strong desire to have an effective cohesive National organisation that parallels, preserves and reflects what was the overall spirit and nature of the ROC organisation.

Currently the N/Comm through its volunteers continues to run the Association on behalf of all members mindful of their responsibilities for good governance of the Association as a whole. The N/Comm maintain a committee structure to facilitate the good governance of finance, Arboretum Grove, the National Standard, Heritage and all other Association business. Facilitates a voice for all members and communications through verbal, written and virtual means.

The N/Comm is of the opinion that the way forward includes:

- To continuously review the Constitution to ensure it reflects current and anticipated needs to address all aspects of running a viable organisation in a democratic and effective way.
- To maintain accounts by tight control on expenditure, sufficient cash flow and a capital reserve to ensure the Association will continue for some years and the final winding up of the Association will be done in a responsible manner. From time to time this will require an increase in affiliation fees to maintain a sustainable level of income to meet rising costs such as public liability insurance.
- The N/Comm know that with the passage of time and reducing membership there will come a time when to continue the Association will no longer be viable. They will need to recognise the only way forward is to wind up the Association. The members entrust to their elected Representatives and Association officers to make that judgement call at the appropriate time. In addition the members do have the ability to democratically make that decision under the current constitution either at the ADM or by calling an EDM.
- To continue the use of volunteer experts to look after specific aspects such as the Arboretum Grove, Web, Heritage and Keeper of the National Standard. Their knowledge of the specialised area is shared with and will inform the N/Comm to enable the smooth hand over to relevant bodies and the laying up of the National Standard when the time comes.

Looking forward to the future we all recognise that the Association has a limited life span. The N/Comm has to be ready to respond to falling membership and consequential reduction in the number of Groups. Such plans the N/Comm see as remaining flexible, responsive to change and responsible.

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The Group Committees have their own responsibility to ensure their Group and Branch Constitutions are up to date to reflect their member's wishes and cover the eventual closure of the Group. The Group Committee is recommended to keep the N/Comm fully informed of their plans on closure and to provide the Area Representative or the N/Comm Officers with a copy of the Group's Constitution.

To provide annually to the National Membership Secretary their current membership list to ensure communication can be maintained in the unlikely event of a Group failure unable to instigate closure plans.

The Report to the N/Comm in July 2010 summarised the discussion on the long- term future of the Association held by Groups following the 2010 ADM. The report was in response to the protracted discussion in respect of raising capitation levels at the 2009 ADM.

The main areas considered in the Report fell under the following headings:

The Structure
Area Representatives
National Executive Committee
Communication
Annual Delegates Meeting Resolutions
Finance
National Reunion
Heritage & Legacy

The N/Comm continues its consideration and review mindful that following the report further discussion and feedback received at the 2010 Reunion direct from the members indicated caution not to rush into change but to take a measured broad perspective to look at the requirements for the furtherance of good governance. To manage the future of the Association to ensure it did not fragment and slowly fade away as the report suggested would happen if there were no changes.

What we have done so far and the priorities for the on -going review:

The Structure, Area Representatives and National Executive Committee –

In addition to the Officers – Chairman, Treasurer, and National Secretary – The N/Comm should continue to have a Representative of the front line members elected directly by the members.

The N/Comm will review in the coming year the structure for choosing the member's representative. The need to get the right volunteer person onto the N/Comm to represent local members who is willing to continuously work with the local members and with the Group Committees to provide the best support and representation of the local member's interests.

The review will consider:

- A review of the options for the selection and election of the member's representation.
- The N/Comm will look at the viability to reshape itself away from the Area focus and if this is appropriate to replace with an alternative selection process.
- To look at who is best placed to be the member's representative for example should this be a representative selected from Group Chairman, on a regional, geographical, Group Cluster basis based on membership levels.
- Part of the review will include the overall Committee structure and the current process for election of the Officers.

Communication –

A priority for 2012 is to work with the Web Master Roy McDowell to secure the future of an ROC Association web site in whatever format and administration that is practical.

Snippets continue to be the prime means of communication from the N/Comm to the membership. These will continue for the immediate future but will be reviewed in due course to look at on going relevance and format to ensure it continues to serve the purpose.

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The ADM to be held at the Reunion will allow more members the opportunity to contribute directly to debates.

The report asks when if ever has there been Chairmen to Chairmen communication. There has always been informal networking between Chairmen. If Chairmen think there is a need for a formal chain between Groups and the National Chairman then there is nothing to stop them setting this up in whatever way they would like to suggest.

Annual Delegates Meeting Resolutions –

The rules on submission of resolutions are as set in the Constitution. There are currently no plans by the N/Comm to change the rules. The N/Comm as well as Groups may submit Resolutions. The Member's Representative puts forward the views of the Groups and member's they represent.

Resolutions submitted in accordance with the Constitution are circulated well ahead of the ADM.

A N/Comm meeting is held immediately after the ADM at which the election of the Officers takes place. This meeting will continue to follow the ADM on the Saturday of the Reunion thus allowing the announcement of the Officers for the coming year to be made during the Reunion Dinner.

Finance –

The N/Comm continues to maintain audited accounts circulated to all Groups for review. The move of the ADM to the Reunion will allow a longer period for Groups and members to consider the accounts and the Treasurer's report.

The N/Comm continue to monitor and plan to ensure sufficient funds for annual expenditure and to explore different ways of raising funds to meet repairs and replacement of such items as seats at the National Arboretum and BoB Memorial site. The ADM now at the Reunion will save room hire and reduce the N/Comm travel expenditure.

Reunion –

As long as there continues to be viable support to run a National Reunion the N/Comm will continue to organise it. When it is no longer cost effective or supported by sufficient

members other options to suit the members at that time will be considered.

The N/Comm recognised and took action to stop running the National Raffle when this was no longer viable. There is no reason to indicate that the N/Comm will fail to react to changed levels of support in all aspects of the Association.

Heritage and Legacy –

This is the area the Report recognised where almost universally everyone wanted something done but there was little clarity on what exactly was required.

It was therefore this area of the report that the N/Comm addressed first during 2010/11.

The Archivist was renamed National Heritage Officer to better reflect the role and future responsibilities.

By Christmas 2010 volunteers had been sought and come forward. These geographically spread volunteers were tasked by the N/Comm to formulate an initial outline National Heritage Strategy to be presented to Delegates at the April 2011 ADM.

Following the ADM presentation to Delegates the Heritage Team were asked by the N/Comm to prepare a report and potential costs to enable the N/Comm to agree a policy and strategy that the Heritage Team would over time implement on behalf of the membership.

The Strategy includes the following areas:

- How to have a national record of the locations and content of ROC Museums/Heritage?
- How best to support and work in partnership with museums, collections and individuals to help them when requested with preservation and source equipment/material.
- How to promote and publicise the ROC role and educate future generations?
- How best to preserve the existing and on-going donations to the Association of ROC Archive material held by the former National Archivist now called National Heritage Officer and the growing Association history.

In the intervening 9 months the N/Comm were kept fully informed on progress and all decisions and expenditure approved. Their meeting on 4th February 2012 was the first opportunity the N/Comm had to consider the Team's ideas and discuss the general policy on the role of the Association Heritage. The N/Comm will shortly publicise the framework that sets out the Team's terms of reference. The Team may only act within the authority of the N/Comm who retain full control of heritage funding, decisions and remains fully responsible for the actions of the Heritage Team. A report from the National Heritage Officer will be made to the ADM and Delegates/Members invited to raise questions.

Summary

The Constitution either currently or as amended in the future sets out the structure for the running of the Association. The Constitution requires there to be Officers and a Committee of elected representatives to administer the day –to-day organisation and Association business. There is no reason to suppose that there will be no responsible Officers in place to formally wind up the Association when the time is right. It will be for that N/Comm to ensure the winding up is done in accordance with the Constitution. Such winding up will include all the areas referred to in the Report and to cover Notification to our Patron, laying up of the National Standard, Handing over responsibility for the Arboretum Grove, the BoB Memorial seat and future of our Heritage and Legacy items.

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The importance for the N/Comm is to recognize when that time has arrived to start winding up. There will be indicators and triggers that will forewarn the N/Comm and membership that action and preparations need to be put in hand, for example the reduction in overall membership the closing of Groups. Before that happens the member representative on the N/Comm should have already worked with the Group and members to see if the fall in individual Group members can be stemmed and the reasons for the fall.

The Laying up of the National Standard – The National Standard continues to be in high demand for use at all types of National and local Parades. There are no immediate plans for its laying up. Any plan would have to be flexible to meet member's wishes and changing circumstances.

The Keeper and her deputy have been asked to consider the options and gather in ideas on suitable places for the laying up when the time is right. These will be very tentative and remain flexible.

The N/Comm will continue to publicise, liaise with other organisations and encourage participation in National events. The Association's participation in National events raises our profile re-enforces the ROC history and promotes our existence to make sure others and ex ROC know about us to encourage new members and thus extend the life of the Association.

The N/Comm continues to review the way the Association is managed and to conduct the Association for and on behalf of all the members.

March 2012

This Report to the ROC Association Members compiled and issued by the National Committee:

John Sharpe – Chairman

Jenny Morris – National Secretary

Diana Mothersole – National Treasurer

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With the support of the Vice Presidents Norman Greig MBE, Hilary Daniel, Joyce Shrubbs MBE